



Congressman Mike Simpson

E-Newsletter

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Simpson Introduces Kid's Dental Care Bill

In a news conference Congressman Mike Simpson joined colleague Albert R. Wynn (MD) today, to announce the introduction of the Essential Oral Health Care Act of 2007. This Act will improve the delivery of dental services in state Medicaid and SCHIP programs, provide grants for Community Dental Health Coordinator training as well as for volunteer missions of mercy dental projects, and provide a tax credit for donated dental services.

"Tooth decay is a preventable, infectious disease," said Simpson. "If untreated, it can impede a child's ability to eat, speak, learn, and in extreme cases, it can lead to death. As is the case in most diseases, early detection is vital; this legislation will help get treatment to kids who need it most."

Minority, low-income, and geographically isolated children suffer disproportionately from dental cavities. In fact, 80 percent of all tooth decay is found in 25 percent of children—children who are overrepresented in the lower socioeconomic strata. The recent tragic death of Deamonte Driver, a twelve year-old boy from Maryland who died from a brain infection resulting from an abscessed tooth, demonstrates the need to address access to care issues for our most vulnerable citizens.

The impact of poor oral health can, as this tragic case shows, go far beyond the mouth. It is well-documented that poor oral health can lead to oral infections that can affect systemic health. Oral bacteria have been associated with bacterial pneumonia in bed or chair-bound patients, increased risk of heart attack and may also be passed from mother to

child resulting in a higher prevalence of cavities in young children.

The Essential Oral Health Care Act will improve the delivery of dental services in state Medicaid and SCHIP programs, provide grants for Community Dental Health Coordinator training programs and volunteer dental projects and provide tax credits for donated dental services. It also:

- Provides each State an option to accept an increase in its Federal Medical Assistance Percentage rate for its dental Medicaid and SCHIP programs provided certain access to care provisions are met. States that increase the percentage of plan users and participating dentists will continue to receive the enhanced match.
- Authorizes grants to pilot the Community Dental Health Coordinator (CDHC) position which will work in underserved communities, in collaboration with health and community organizations and schools to provide community-focused oral health promotion. The CDHC will also connect residents with limited dental care access to dentists.
- Authorizes grants for volunteer dental programs by community-based organizations, state dental associations, dental schools, and hospitals with post-doctoral dental education programs to provide free dental care to underserved populations.
- Encourages dentists to provide additional donated dental services by providing a \$5,000 tax credit for free and discounted services provided.



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FY08 Interior Appropriations Passes House

Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson, member of the House Appropriations Committee, joined colleagues today in passing H.R. 2643, the Interior Appropriations FY08 Funding Bill. The legislation passed the House with a vote of 272-155.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) requires the federal government to make payments to local governments to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries. "While we are still not at the desired full funding of PILT, this bill does move in the right direction and provides over \$253 million for the program that many counties in Idaho desperately need."

Funding to Fight Wildfires also fared well in this appropriations bill. "Last year was the most expensive year on record for fighting wildfires," said Simpson. "This bill includes \$2.8 billion to prevent and fight wildfires by funding programs that remove hazardous fuels, rehabilitates burned lands, supporting fire suppression operations, and assists state and local firefighters."

In 2016, the nation will celebrate the centennial anniversary of our National Parks Service. H.R. 2643 includes \$2.512 billion to upgrade our parks in time for this historic event. Idaho projects included in the bill are:

The **Auger Falls Wastewater Treatment Project** in Twin Falls will receive an additional \$500,000 in this bill. "The City of Twin Falls and those involved should be commended for realizing a need and creatively filling that need with a wastewater treatment facility and a plan for future science trails and parks," said Simpson.

The **Snake River Basin Agreement (SRBA)** will receive over \$21 million in FY08. This funding is part of the Snake River Water Rights Act of 2004 that settled water rights claims on the Snake River by the Nez Perce Tribe. The Interior Appropriations legislation also provides funding to ensure public access along the South Fork. "The Upper Snake and South

Fork is world renowned and I'm pleased that this legislation provides funding to keep land along the river scenic, undeveloped and allow for public access," said Simpson. \$1.5 million is appropriated for land conservation for the **Upper**

Snake/South Fork Snake River Area. The legislation will now be considered by the U.S. Senate.



Sumer Safety Tips from the Missing and Exploited Children Organization www.missingkids.com

1. Always CHECK FIRST with your parents, guardians, or the trusted adult in charge before you go anywhere or do anything.
2. Always TAKE A FRIEND with you when playing or going anywhere.
3. Never accept anything from anyone without your parents' or guardians' permission.
4. Keep the door locked; and DO NOT open it for strangers.
5. Never go into a public restroom by yourself.
6. Never go alone to malls, movies, video arcades, or parks..
7. Don't panic if you feel lost. Identify the safest place to go or person to ask for help in reuniting you with your parents or guardians.
8. Be careful when you play. Stay away from pools, canals, and other bodies of water unless you are with a trusted adult.
9. Don't wear clothes or carry items with your name on the outside.
10. Don't get into a vehicle or go near a vehicle with anyone in it unless you are with a trusted adult.
11. Be careful playing or riding your bicycle as it gets dark.
12. Don't be afraid to say NO and GET AWAY from any situation making you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. TRUST YOUR FEELINGS, and be sure to TELL a trusted adult if anything happens to make you feel this way.



Simpson Cosponsors Major Rural Health Care Legislation

Idaho Congressmen Mike Simpson joined fellow members of the Rural Health Care Coalition, co-chaired by Congressmen Greg Walden (R-OR) and Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), in cosponsoring H.R. 2680, the Health Care Access and Rural Equity Act of 2007 (H-CARE). This bipartisan bill would help rural health care providers address the challenges associated with delivering quality care close to home.

H-CARE Act makes several improvements to our nation's health care infrastructure that would help rural health care providers address their unique challenges. Specifically, the bill would do the following:

- Authorize health information technology grants for rural practitioners.
- Provide flexibility in the number of beds Critical Access Hospitals are allowed to fill.
- Require prompt payment to rural pharmacies by Medicare prescription drug plans.
- Ensure adequate rural representation on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.
- Establish a Rural Health Quality Advisory Commission.
- Raise Rural Health Clinic reimbursements to more appropriately cover costs.

Extend several expiring Medicare adjustment payments for rural practitioners including physicians practicing in physician-scarce areas, rural ambulance providers, rural home health agencies and specific classes of rural hospitals.

"While the rural character of Idaho provides our state with many cultural and scenic riches, it also presents unique challenges in many aspects of daily life – including the delivery of quality health care to rural communities and residents," **Simpson said**. "This legislation would help rural communities stay current with technology, prescription drug plans and reimbursements, all of which are extremely important to delivering the best health care possible."

Organizations that support H.R. 2860 include the National Rural Health Association, American Hospital Association, American Osteopathic Association, American Ambulance Association, National Association of Rural Health Clinics, National Association for Home Care and Hospice, College of American Pathologists, Rural Referral Center/Sole Community Hospital Coalition, Federation of American Hospitals, American Counseling Association, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists, Association of Community Pharmacists, the Section 508 Hospital Coalition and the American Mental Health Counselors Association.

Bills in Congress Aimed at Teachers and Classrooms

Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson announced his co-sponsorship of two important pieces of legislation that will provide resources for school improvements and help school districts retain qualified teachers. The America's Better Classroom Act (H.R. 2470) and the Teacher Tax Credit Act of 2007 (H.R. 2287) are both enjoying bipartisan support.

The Teacher Tax Credit Act of 2007 would provide a non-refundable tax credit to teachers and principals who work at school-wide Title I eligible schools. The legislation would help rural schools in Idaho hire and retain qualified teachers.

"It is difficult for rural school districts to retain qualified teachers," said Simpson. "By offering a tax credit to these teachers, we hope to help these areas obtain and maintain necessary educators."

The America's Better Classrooms Act would help provide more than \$25 billion in zero-interest school modernization bonds by providing tax credit to bond holders for the interest normally paid on a bond.

"Federally-funded tax credits would free up local funds for other education needs," said Simpson. "For each \$1,000 in school bonds, the State or Local school districts would benefit by about \$500. Idaho would receive an estimated \$93,409 in bond allocations."

Both bills have been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, in addition, H.R. 2470 has also been referred to House Committee on Education and Labor.

Weekly Website

Visit:

<http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/drown.htm>

to learn more about water safety.

Acquiring Your Passport: What You Need to Know

Lately I've been hearing a lot from constituents with passport concerns. They need it for upcoming travel and it is still being processed. Passport demand has dramatically increased over the past few months and the time it takes to get a new or renewed passport has stretched far beyond the conventional month and a half that many expected when they applied.

In 2004, the 9-11 Commission Report examined our nation's passport system and found that it was unable to ensure the identity of those traveling to and from the United States, severely compromising our national security. In order to address these serious deficiencies, Congress has taken a number of steps to ensure that all individuals entering the US have a secure passport.

These changes are vital to our national security, preventing those who wish to do us harm from penetrating our borders. It will take some time for them to be properly implemented, and in the meantime we are inevitably seeing delays at passport processing facilities. The Passport Service has already issued 8.6 million passports this year, a 33 percent increase over last year.

Last week the Department of Homeland Security announced temporary flexibility for US citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. I am pleased that DHS has made accommodation for travelers this summer. However, it is still imperative that you apply for your passport as early as possible. As you make your travel plans for the rest of the year, please keep in mind the following tips to ensure that you have your passport in plenty of time:

- **If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, or Bermuda before September 30, 2007**
- **All other international travel still requires a passport.**
- **If you have applied for a passport, you can track its progress online at:**
http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/get/status/status_2567.html.
- **Routine passport applications can be tracked 3-4**

weeks after the application was sent. Expedited applications can be tracked after one week.

- **If you need a passport for your summer travel and have not received it within two weeks of your departure date, please contact one of my district offices for assistance. My staff can work with Passport Services to check the application status and help expedite the process if necessary. Phone numbers for my district offices can be found at my website:**
<http://www.house.gov/simpson/contact.shtml>.

Beginning October 2007, all individuals traveling between Mexico or Canada and the United States by plane, including young children, must have a valid passport. In 2008, this requirement will extend to ALL travel within North America. Because of these changes, you should consider applying for a passport even if you are not currently planning an international trip. In addition, if you currently have a passport, take the time to check its expiration date and apply for a renewal if necessary.

Right now it can take up to 10-12 weeks to receive your passport once you apply. Passport service can be expedited for an addition \$60 per application, but you should still expect 2-3 weeks before you receive your passport. If you are planning to travel internationally any time in the near future, you should apply now for a new or renewed passport. you can still depart from and enter the United States by air with government-issued photo identification and a print-out of the online status check accessed at

<http://travel.state.gov/passport>. This will show that your application for a passport has been received by the Department of State. Please note, however, that once you send your application it can take 3-4 before you can access it online. All US citizens, including young children, must have proof that they have applied for a passport.

I have been pleased with the effort made by the Department of State to work with my office to address the huge influx of passport applications. It is always a good idea to have a valid passport, and if you have questions about applying I encourage you to visit www.travel.state.gov or contact one of my offices for more information.

